

Reserve News

October 2016



Sussex
Wildlife Trust

Making hay

Managing its grasslands is one of the biggest challenges facing the Trust's nature reserves team: whether it's the timing of grazing starting, the need to trim sheep hooves, to set up pens, top up the water bowser, or cutting back the bramble, there is complexity everywhere.

To improve management even further, the Trust has been able to purchase hay cutting and baling equipment which has already been used to cut and bale fields at Woods Mill, Brickfield and The Mens. Some of the hay bales from The Mens have even been spread across the Trust's meadow at Cooksbridge in the expectation that this will help to diversify what is a species-poor field.

Some good news

Just about 30 years ago, one of the country's rarest plants disappeared from Waltham Brooks. Cut-grass is largely restricted to a handful of sites in the Arun valley and it is exciting to be able to report that it has reappeared again. This is almost certainly as a consequence of the better targeted grazing of the nature reserve that has been achieved since the Trust bought the grazing rights some five or six years ago.

Further west at Levin Down, a review of the site by the Trust's Senior Ecologist has also shown that the area occupied by heather has doubled since the last survey five years ago. This is great news and is a tribute to the combined efforts of staff, volunteers and contractors (plus the Trust's livestock) over many years. It is also a further sign that the condition of this nature reserve continues to improve.

Volunteer Social

In September we held a barbeque and thank you event for our reserve volunteers for the second year running. It was an great opportunity for us to thank in person many of our volunteers who were able to attend.

General Information

- * Please help us if you can by taking part in some of the many conservation tasks arranged throughout the year.
- * Please always check with the task leader for further information and before a task, to make sure that the arrangements are still as stated.
- * All you need to bring are old clothes, suitable footwear, food and drink and plenty of enthusiasm. Tools and training are provided, though for some tasks you may wish to invest in a pair of gardening gloves [not to be worn when using swinging tools such as bill hooks and slashers, as they are more likely to slip from gloved hands]. You are advised to be up to date with your tetanus immunisation.

If you no longer wish to receive this mail-out or are unable to volunteer for the SWT, please could you contact Liz Francis, Volunteer Administrator Tel. 01273 497562 E-mail: lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk. Above all, have a good time, and thank you for helping us to conserve the wild places of Sussex.



WEST SUSSEX RESERVES WITH PRACTICAL DAYS

Ebernoe Common SU 975 278 nr. Petworth and Wisborough Green
Almost 200 acres of ancient woodland with glades and ponds plus 200 acres of farmland, much of which is now being grazed as part of the conversion from arable to wood pasture. This reserve seems enchanted with its many diverse species of woodland plants and animals. Delightful in spring with its violets and daffodils and in autumn with fungi. Although grazing has been re-introduced to this ancient wood pasture it is still necessary to control the invasive bracken and holly and keep the glades and rides open for butterflies etc. (Monthly task day usually a Saturday and/or Tuesday)
Contact: **Colin Booty 01403 732175**
Meet: 10.00 at Ebernoe church (down track signposted church, 1 mile east of A283).

Graffham Common SU932196 near Midhurst.
We are starting a new volunteer group at our newest nature reserve. This group will run at weekends and will be co-ordinated by the Volunteer Reserve Manager. Graffham Common is a heathland reserve, recently restored from pine plantations. Rare heathland birds have already returned to the site. Work groups will focus on scrub removal to protect the re-emerging heathland habitat.
Contact: **Graham Ault** on: grahamault@btinternet.com or **Liz Francis** on **01273 497 562** lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk

Levin Down SU 887 131 nr. Chichester and Midhurst
A lovely hill of south and east facing downland and mixed scrub including juniper and the very rare chalk heath habitat. Parts of the reserve are carpeted with chalk loving flowers in summer, and the reserve is also good for butterflies such as Brown Argus, Grizzled Skipper and Brown Hairstreak. The management includes clearing scrub - to open up the grassland and provide glades for the butterflies and to keep pathways open. (Twice monthly task day usually a Sunday, Oct – Mar, volunteers 18yrs+ only please)
Contact: **Liz Francis** on **01273 497562** or lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk
Meet: 10.00am at Charlton Cross Roads. Please ensure that you contact Liz with your details before attending for the first time so that Ann Griffiths, the Volunteer Reserve Manager can let you know if the task is going ahead as planned.

West Dean Woods SU 845 153 nr. Chichester and Midhurst
This is a superb example of an ancient hazel coppice, which is worked in a traditional way by the volunteers, producing hedgelaying rods and stakes, beanpoles etc. The woodland floor is covered in flowers in the spring, and there is a huge colony of daffodils in the north of the reserve. New volunteer input is required here to continue the excellent work started some 30 years ago. (Task days every Monday (except in Summer) and Thursdays most of the year).
Contact: **Phil King** pdck@btinternet.com **07701 371198** or **Liz Francis** on **01273 497 562** lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk
Meet: A286 Chichester-Midhurst, at West Dean take minor road opposite The Dean Public House for 2 miles, at reserve sign take track through woodland on right.

Woods Mill TQ 218 138 nr. Henfield
The headquarters of the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the best educational reserve in the land! Its different habitat types, which include meadow, wetlands, scrub and ancient woodland makes the work varied and interesting.
Contact: This weekly Friday group is often at full capacity but please contact **Liz Francis** on **01273 497562** or lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk if you would like your name to be added to the waiting list.

EAST SUSSEX RESERVES WITH PRACTICAL DAYS

Rye Harbour TQ 941 189 nr. Rye
Rye Harbour Nature Reserve is fabulous for its wetland and coastal wildlife. Bare shingle, saltmarsh, pasture, open water, reedbeds and willow scrub make for varied habitats and varied tasks to manage them! Weekly work parties are no longer held on a regular basis, but if you wish to volunteer please call **01797 227 784**.

Filsham Reedbed TQ 780088 nr Bexhill and Hastings
One of the largest surviving reedbeds in Sussex is home to many breeding warblers during the summer. The ponds attract many birds in the autumn and winter including Harriers, Bitterns and Kingfishers. Tasks include scrub and reed cutting, maintaining paths for visitor access, and keeping the open water areas free from encroaching vegetation. (Monthly task day usually a Saturday)
Contact: **Anthony Brown 07933 607926**

Flatropers Wood TQ 863 234 nr. Rye and Northiam
This lovely Wealden wood consists mostly of oak and birch, which used to be managed for timber production. There is a stream and a pond that supports palmate newts. Bracken and trees need to be managed in places to encourage the spread of heather, and the ride edges need to be coppiced, to promote increased diversity of flora and butterflies. (task days usually on Sundays)
Contact: **Derek Bates 01424 425538** Meet: 10.00am by the middle entrance on Bixley Lane, Beckley.

Gillham Wood TQ 716 069 Cooden nr. Bexhill
This 7.9 acre reserve is an oasis within Cooden village. The wood is mainly oak with holly, hazel and the delightful guelder rose. Indicators of the woods age include the prickly butcher's broom. Keen residents manage the wood as members of the Friends of Gillham Wood. (task day usually the first Saturday of each quarter)
Contact: **Liz Francis** on **01273 497 562** or lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk or contact **Alice Parfitt** AliceParfitt@sussexwt.org.uk

Malling Down TQ 423 107 nr. Lewes
This chalk downland area is rich in flowers such as the Common Spotted Orchid and Round Headed Rampion and is a stronghold for the rare Adonis Blue butterfly and Silver Spotted Skipper. It is essential to keep scrub from taking over the shorter and warmer turf that the butterflies and Downland flowers like. (Monthly task day usually a Sunday, October - February)
Contact: **Peter Hodge 01273 812047**
Meet: Usually the top of Mill Road, Lewes (map ref. TQ422111) at 10:00 am. Please contact the above for up to date information.

Marline Valley

TQ 783 122

nr. Hastings and Battle

A beautiful mixture of woodlands, streams and meadows. The hornbeam woods produce a riot of colourful flowers in spring, the stream supports many rare mosses and the meadows are excellent for flowers and butterflies. Scrub around the meadow needs to be coppiced, bramble and bracken controlled, and the footpath network needs maintaining. (Monthly task day usually a Sunday)

Contact: **Owen Johnson 01424 426986**

Meet: 9.45 am. As this is a large reserve with difficult parking, please contact the Volunteer Reserve Manager to find each working group. Lifts are available from Hastings Station at 9.30am on each task day.

Old Lodge

TQ 470 305

nr. Crowborough and Forest Row

Part of the Ashdown Forest, work is still needed here to maintain a mixture of pine woodland and heathland. A good site for heathland birds and a wide range of dragonflies. Pine, birch, bracken and gorse need to be controlled on this large area to complement the work done by grazing animals, and some work needs to be done on the many small ponds.

Contact: **Martin Wilkinson on 01892 542929 or Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk**

Meet: Tuesdays:9:00am opposite the Top Lodge cottages along the Old Lodge private road.

Seaford Head

TV 5043 9807

nr. Seaford and Eastbourne

The Trust currently manages part of Seaford Head Local Nature Reserve and holds a regular task group on the first Thursday of each month to carry out practical conservation in this iconic landscape.

Contact: **Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk or Sarah Quantrill sarahquantrill@sussexwt.org.uk**

Selwyns Wood

TQ 552 205

nr. Heathfield and Uckfield

Much of this mixed woodland used to be chestnut coppice. There is an expanding area of heathland, and a mixture of oak and other trees has been planted to replace dense birch stands. Regular maintenance tasks consist of path clearance, coppicing, bracken and scrub control to maintain the heather area and removing invasive rhododendron. Weekly Thursday task day.

Contact: **Trevor Hince 01435 863364 (please note that this group is currently at full capacity)**

Meet: Thursdays 9.30-12.30. From Cross-in-Hand, turn off B2192 by Methodist church into Fir Grove Road. Reserve ½m on left.

OTHER PRACTICAL VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Weekly Conservation Hit Squad

We have 3 weekday practical conservation hit squads which provide an opportunity for volunteers who would like to get involved with regular volunteering on our reserves. Each group meets weekly at Woods Mill and spends the day (9am to 5pm approx) travelling as a team in the Trust's Land Rover to various nature reserves in Sussex. Tasks include scrub clearance, removal of non-native species, grassland management, reed cutting, woodland management, fence repair etc. 'Hit Squad' volunteers should be 16 or over and a degree of physical fitness is necessary alongside some interest in wildlife & conservation. The 3 groups are as follows:

- Tuesday hit squad - East Sussex Reserves
- Wednesday hit squad - West Sussex Reserves
- Thursday hit squad - Central Sussex Reserves

If you are looking to volunteer with one of these groups on a regular basis, please contact **Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 or lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk** to arrange a taster day.

Saturday Conservation Hit Squad

The Trust also runs a Saturday Conservation Hit Squad (approx 9.00am to 4pm). The group is based at Woods Mill, Henfield, and from there the team travels in the Land Rover to various reserves across both East and West Sussex to carry out vital conservation tasks. There is also the option of meeting on site, if you prefer. This is a weekly group; however you don't need to commit to volunteering every week. Volunteers need to be 16 years or over and have a reasonable level of fitness.

If you would like come and have a taster day, please contact **Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk or contact Sarah Quantrill sarahquantrill@sussexwt.org.uk**

Wednesday Midhurst Conservation Hit Squad (West Sussex Heathland Sites)

The Trust runs a weekly conservation hit squad based in the Midhurst area and would love to hear from volunteers in the local area who would like to get involved. The group, which works in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority, carries out practical conservation tasks on Wednesdays at various heathland sites such as Stedham and Iping Commons, Graffham Common, Ambersham & Heyshot Commons and Weavers Down. You don't have to commit to coming every week, just let the leader know when you'd like to attend. Meet at Midhurst Depot or on site. No experience is necessary, but volunteers should be enthusiastic and have a reasonable level of fitness.

Please contact **Jane Willmott on 07557 162406 or janewillmott@sussexwt.org.uk** to try a taster day or to find out more.

Gatwick Greenspace Partnership

Gatwick Greenspace Partnership is a Living Landscape project that works to benefit people, wildlife and the countryside between Horsham, Crawley, Horley, Reigate and Dorking. If you live in or around the Gatwick Greenspace area you may be interested in volunteering with this project, where there are regular volunteer tasks to carry out rhododendron removal, heathland management, pond work, tree planting, installation of boardwalks and stiles etc.

For more information please contact **Kevin Lerwill on 01293 550730 or kevinlerwill@sussexwt.org.uk** or look at the website: <https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/community-projects/gatwick> and download their volunteer task programme. To keep up to date with the work of the Gatwick Greenspace Project, please contact Kevin to request their E-newsletter.

Youth Rangers (16-25 year olds)

The Trust runs youth ranger groups for 16-25 year olds on Wednesdays at Tilgate Park in Crawley and Thursdays at Stanmer Park in Brighton. Tasks includes habitat management and maintenance in local greenspaces and nature reserves, planting hedgerows, wildlife gardening, tool use and maintenance, woodworking and wildlife identification. This is an ideal opportunity for young people seeking a career in the countryside. No formal qualifications required but enthusiastic individuals with a keen interest in wildlife and the environment, and a willingness to work outdoors in all weather conditions, are welcomed. Please contact the leader beforehand to check the day is going ahead as planned.

More information on the website: <https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer>

Crawley Group (Wednesdays – term time): **Tom Forward, on 07771 375 254 or tomforward@sussexwt.org.uk**

Brighton Group (Thursdays): **Huw Morgan, on 07771 375273 or huwmorgan@sussexwt.org.uk**

CONSERVATION TASK CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2016

Mon	31 West Dean Woods	3 West Dean Woods	10 West Dean Woods	17 West Dean Woods	24 West Dean Woods
Tues		4 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad	11 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad	18 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad Ebernoe Common	25 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad
Wed		5 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	12 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	19 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	26 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Gatwick Greenspace
Thurs		6 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers	13 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers Seaford Head	20 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers	27 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers
Fri		7 Woods Mill	14 Woods Mill	21 Woods Mill	28 Woods Mill
Sat	1 Saturday Hit Squad Ebernoe Common Filsham Reedbed Gillham Wood	8 Saturday Hit Squad	15 Saturday Hit Squad	22 Saturday Hit Squad	29 Saturday Hit Squad
Sun	2	9 Levin Down	16 Malling Down Gatwick Greenspace	23 Levin Down Gatwick Greenspace	30

NOVEMBER 2016

Mon		7 West Dean Woods	14 West Dean Woods	21 West Dean Woods	28 West Dean Woods
Tues	1 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad	8 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad	15 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad Ebernoe Common	22 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad	29 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad Gatwick Greenspace
Wed	2 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	9 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	16 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	23 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	30 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace
Thurs	3 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers Seaford Head	10 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers	17 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers	24 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers	
Fri	4 Woods Mill	11 Woods Mill	18 Woods Mill	25 Woods Mill	
Sat	5 Saturday Hit Squad Ebernoe Common Filsham Reedbed	12 Saturday Hit Squad	19 Saturday Hit Squad Gatwick Greenspace	26 Saturday Hit Squad	
Sun	6	13 Levin Down Marline Valley	20 Malling Down Flatropers	27 Levin Down Gatwick Greenspace	

DECEMBER 2016

Mon		5 West Dean Woods	12 West Dean Woods	19 West Dean Woods	26 BANK HOLIDAY
Tues		6 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad	13 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad Gatwick Greenspace	20 Old Lodge Tues Hit Squad Ebernoe Common	27 BANK HOLIDAY
Wed		7 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	14 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Crawley Youth Rangers Gatwick Greenspace	21 Midhurst Hit Squad Weds Hit Squad Gatwick Greenspace	28
Thurs	1 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers Seaford Head	8 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers	15 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Brighton Youth Rangers	22 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods Thurs Hit Squad Brighton Youth Rangers	29 Selwyns Wood West Dean Woods
Fri	2 Woods Mill	9 Woods Mill	16 Woods Mill	23	30
Sat	3 Saturday Hit Squad Ebernoe Common Filsham Reedbed	10 Saturday Hit Squad	17 Saturday Hit Squad	24	
Sun	4	11 Levin Down Gatwick Greenspace	18 Malling Down Flatropers Gatwick Greenspace	25 XMAS DAY	